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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 120130Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7145
INFO RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH 4271
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 6182
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//USDP/ISA/AP/ES//
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J00/J005/J006/J01LA/J06/J5//
RHEHNSC/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 000147

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR EAP/MLS, EAP/EP, EAP/RSP, EAP/PD, OES/PCI
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR ANE, G/ENV
STATE PASS TO EPA/OIA (DENNIS CUNNINGHAM AND MARK KASMAN)
STATE PASS TO EPA/ORD (KEVIN TEICHMAN)
HHS/OSSI/DSI PASS TO OGHA (WSTIEGER/MLVALDEZ/CHICKEY), NIH: FIC
(RGLASS) AND NIEHS
CDC FOR OGHA (SBLOUT/KMCCALL), NCEH (TSINKS), NIOSH (MHSWEENEY)
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (TSHUBERT AND WVAN HOUTEN)
BANGKOK PASS TO RDM/A (OCARDUNER AND JPASCH)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [KPAO](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH US-VN DIALOGUE GROUP ON AGENT
ORANGE-DIOXIN

Ref: A. Hanoi 0037 B. 2007 Hanoi 2113 C. 2007 Hanoi 1476

¶1. (SBU) Summary. On February 1, Ambassador Michalak met with the U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue Group on Agent Orange-Dioxin (Dialogue Group). Formed by the Aspen Institute, with support from the Ford Foundation, the Dialogue Group made its second visit to Vietnam to observe containment measures at the Danang airport hotspot, review funding priorities for the Ford Foundation Special Initiative on Agent Orange/Dioxin (Special Initiative), and meet with Government of Vietnam (GVN) officials. During the meeting, Dialogue Group members reviewed the Special Initiative goals, programs and plans for the future. Ambassador Michalak highlighted recent U.S. initiatives. Though they still have some concerns, Dialogue Group members appeared satisfied with U.S. efforts to expend the USD 3 million in 2007 ESF funds appropriated for "dioxin remediation and health projects." End Summary.

Dialogue Group

¶2. (SBU) The Dialogue Group, an assembly of prominent individuals from both nations who are seeking "to increase awareness and resources around a humanitarian agenda," is comprised of five prominent private sector Americans and five prominent Vietnamese. Convened by Susan Berresford, the former President of the Ford Foundation, this was the second visit by the Dialogue Group to Vietnam, though only two of the five American members (Walter Isaacson, CEO of the Aspen Institute, and Vaughn Turekian, Chief International Officer of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science) could attend. In addition to meeting with the Ambassador, Dialogue Group members reviewed dioxin containment measures at the Danang hotspot, discussed possible Ford Foundation grants using the remaining USD 7.2 million set aside for this Special Initiative, visited with senior GVN officials, and held a press conference to detail its efforts.

¶3. (SBU) The Ford Foundation financially supports the Dialogue Group, which, according to Berresford, serves three purposes: to aid people imperiled by Agent Orange; to end continuing human exposure; and to restore devastated landscapes. (Note: Per ref A, Madame Ton Nu Thi Ninh, the head of the Vietnamese Dialogue Group delegation,

listed similar, but somewhat different, objectives at the Ford Foundation funded national disabilities workshop in December 2007.) To accomplish these goals, the Dialogue Group has identified five projects: coordinating dioxin containment measures at the Danang hotspot; training of trainers to respond to damage to the landscape; funding a world-class diagnostic laboratory for testing dioxin and other contaminants; creating a model for providing services to those impacted by dioxin; and mainstreaming the issue with people in America -- with a particular goal to increase support for dioxin initiatives from the business community. Berresford reported that the Gates Foundation and the Atlantic Philanthropies had shown strong interest in helping to fund the diagnostic laboratory.

Ambassador Michalak Highlights U.S. Efforts

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador Michalak stated that the United States was finalizing the implementation strategy for the USD 3 million in 2007 ESF funds. The Embassy continues to meet with our GVN interlocutors in Office 33 (the GVN body that coordinates Agent Orange/dioxin policy) to provide updates on revisions to U.S. policy and to solicit GVN input for how to use the USD 3 million. The Ambassador then detailed recent U.S. efforts to minimize the risk of continued human exposure to dioxin, including the second Joint Advisory Committee meeting in August 2007 (ref C), implementation of earlier State/U.S. Environmental Protection Agency funds to assist containment efforts at the Danang hotspot, and the provision by the Department of Defense to the Vietnamese Ministry of Defense of detailed information on Agent Orange storage and usage. Ambassador Michalak thanked the Ford Foundation and the Director of its Special Initiative, Charles Bailey, for its leadership in moving this issue forward.

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Opportunity to Coordinate Multilateral Efforts

¶5. (SBU) Ambassador Michalak highlighted the increasingly multilateral aspect of the response to Agent Orange/dioxin and U.S. efforts to work with donor partners to organize efforts (ref B). Representatives from the Czech Republic, New Zealand, and Switzerland, among others, recently had approached the Embassy to discuss their ongoing or future involvement. Ambassador Michalak described his plans to host a meeting of current and potential donors to ensure that ongoing individual bilateral efforts complement each other and to work towards integrated projects and programs that donors can coordinate with the GVN.

Dialogue Group Wants Something Visible

¶6. (SBU) Dialogue Group members, notably Isaacson, questioned the Ambassador on the status of the USD 3 million. Madame Ninh noted that the earmark, in and of itself, was meaningful, but that the United States needed to show a deliverable visible to the broader public. Studies played a role in the response effort, but the Vietnamese people wanted to see something tangible. According to Madame Ninh, "you cannot take pictures of studies." Madame Ninh suggested a public event prior to the second anniversary of the Joint Declaration by Presidents Bush and Triet on continued efforts to address environmental contamination near former dioxin storage sites. Generally satisfied with U.S. progress to implement programs with the USD 3 million, Dialogue Group members volunteered their assistance to move the money forward and to provide information on Vietnamese efforts to date to help ensure the money went to the right places. Prompt and effective use of the money would attract additional donor support and facilitate continued U.S. involvement.

¶7. (SBU) Later that day, the Dialogue Group held a press conference with approximately twenty local and international journalists. According to the Ford Foundation Representative for Vietnam, David Hulse, who attended the event, no one requested information about the USD 3 million. The Embassy had released a press release noting the Ambassador's meeting with the Dialogue Group and detailing the

latest U.S. efforts. Dialogue Group members said this "reduced pressure" to speak on the U.S.G. position at the press event. The first few press reports made no comment on the status of plans to implement the USD 3 million.

Comment:

18. (SBU) Prior to this gathering, Embassy officers met with the Ford Foundation's Bailey, who assured us that the Dialogue Group wanted to play a productive role and not attack the United States' efforts to date. Though we had heard that Isaacson, in particular, planned to press for details on the USD 3 million, Ambassador Michalak's review of U.S. efforts seemed to satisfy the Dialogue Group members.

While the Ford Foundation and members of the Dialogue Group sometimes take a more aggressive line in other forums, including public gatherings, we have worked well with the Ford Foundation in joint efforts to contain dioxin in Danang and the Ford Foundation actively recruits other private sector donors to the effort. Though we do not agree with the Ford Foundation or the Dialogue Group on every aspect of this issue, both can play a valuable role in facilitating increased multilateral efforts.

MICHALAK